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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7238
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA IMMEDIATE 1069
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE 0693
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE 0089
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA IMMEDIATE 1011
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0745
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0694
RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA PRIORITY 0325
RUEHNV/AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY 7206

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 003129

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SUBJECT: MFA MEETS WITH JEM REJECTIONIST KHALIL IBRAHIM

REF: STATE 74589

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner. Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) African Affairs DAS-Equivalent Helene Le Gal advised Africa Watcher on May 10 that JEM rejectionist Khalil Ibrahim had arrived in France and requested meetings. The MFA decided that Le Gal should receive him May 11, but he would not meet with A/S-Equivalent Bruno Joubert or the French Presidency. Africa Watcher made clear the strong U.S. preference for the radical isolation of Khalil Ibrahim; however, Le Gal countered that the MFA did not want to cut off contact prior to the May 15 deadline for signing on to the Abuja accord. French Presidential Envoy de Cognac reiterated that line to Africa Watcher on May 11, adding that he would participate in the MFA meeting with Khalil Ibrahim. De Cognac adamantly maintained that the door should not be shut on the JEM. The Abuja accord was not operationally tenable, as it stood, making it imperative to persuade more refractory parties to come aboard. De Cognac planned to appeal to Khalil Ibrahim for JEM cooperation on the basis of the 2004 N'djamena ceasefire.

¶2. (C) Asked about Khalil Ibrahim's status in France, Le Gal explained that he was officially a political refugee. This status equipped him with a French laissez-passer which, unfortunately, allowed him access to all EU countries participating in the Schengen visa accords (reftel demarche). The MFA was examining what leverage they could exercise, however, the refugee status afforded Khalil Ibrahim considerable legal protections.

¶3. (C) Jacques de Labriolle, Deputy in the Africa Cell at the French Presidency, explained that both the Presidency and the MFA had sought in vain to block Khalil Ibrahim from gaining refugee status in December 2003, but the decision at that time resided solely with the French Office for Refugee Protection. That law has since been revised, he explained, but there was no grandfather clause to strip Kahlil Ibrahim of his political refugee status, even though he has exploited it to incite violence. That said, Labriolle suggested that a UN Security Council decision to sanction Khalil Ibrahim under UNSCR 1591 (2005) might possibly create the necessary legal grounds under French law to attack his refugee status.

¶4. (C) Both Le Gal and Labriolle emphasized their low regard for Khalil Ibrahim and their belief that he would continue to work to block application of the peace agreement in Darfur. Le Gal suggested his attachment to Darfur was secondary to ambitions in Chad. Labriolle labeled Khalil Ibrahim an

unreconstructed follower of Turabi whose double game had managed to dupe certain U.S. parties into believing he was a credible interlocutor. De Cognac however was more sanguine and committed to the view that Khalil Ibrahim could still be a partner for dialogue.

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Stapleton